



*the*  
**Noiseless Spider**  
*a literary magazine*

# THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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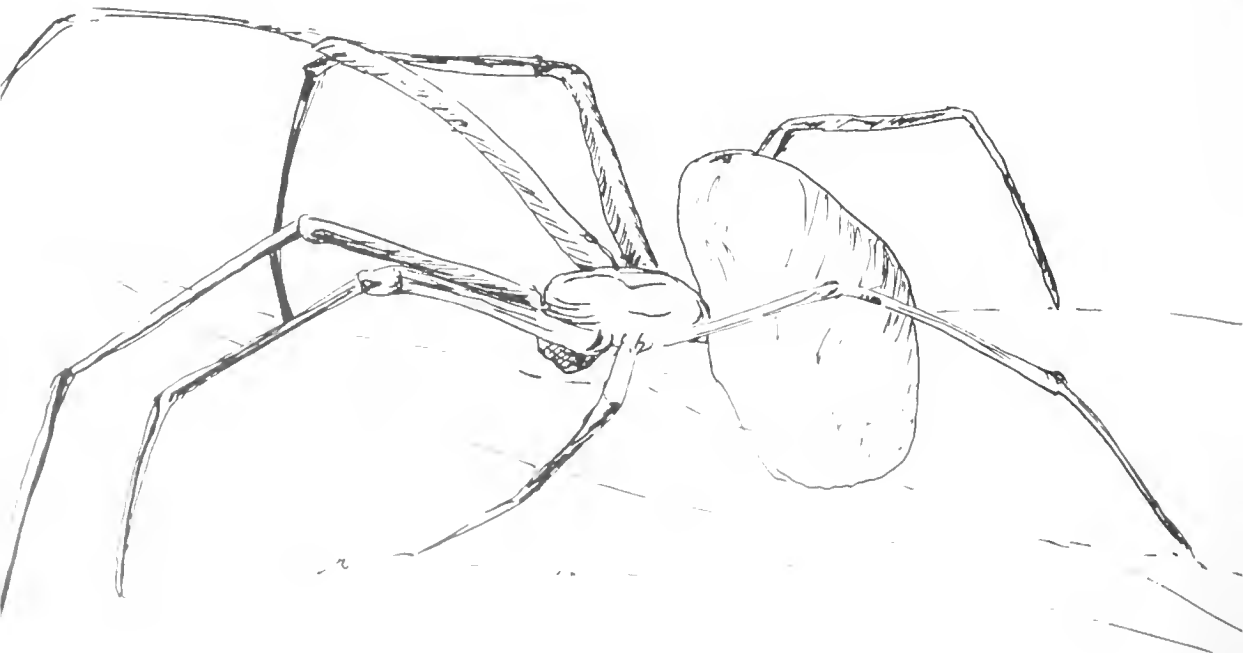
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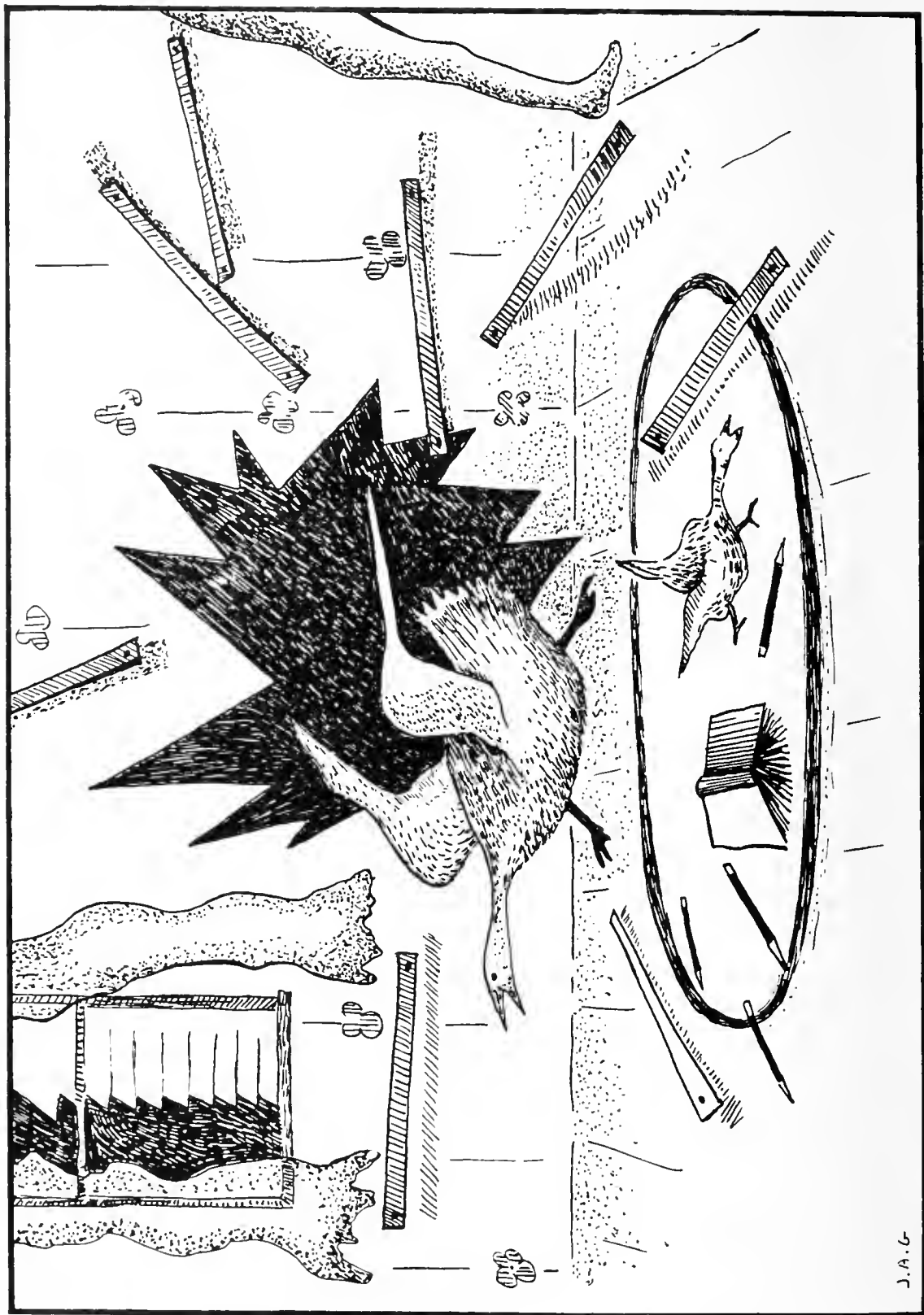
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J.A.G.

— Joan Gardner

### **If I Were A Goose**

awk squawk!  
a hawk!  
bam slam  
a man!  
If I were a goose  
I'd flutter in utter amazement  
at two legged bandy legged bandits  
I'd seen on the road by the room  
  
I'd have no excuse  
for the flurry I'd loose  
except at the tail ends of brooms.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

## Homer

The child Homer  
Teases a little girl  
With a stick.

His eyes  
Not yet gone blind  
See where to hit.

— *Jay Halpern*

## Youngest in the Ward

How can anybody sleep  
who's been parked in a bed all day?  
But the rest of them are snoring,  
one a dog and one an ocean;  
one, wind in a tree; and one  
a wound; the others, cars and trucks.  
Six hours until the nurses bring  
our morning pills in dixie cups.

They pass by intermittently  
with lights, like roadstops on a pike—  
make sure no bed is driverless.  
(While they arranged me for the knife,  
one of them compared my shaved  
and unshaved legs, "Half man, half woman."  
Then the anaesthesia towed me  
under the repairmen's hands.)

Driving healthward with the rest  
I lack their sureness of the road.  
This is the country of the old.  
I wear my glasses in the dark.

— *Edward Stessel*

## Family

It's a worn and frayed thread  
holding together my favorite pair of blue jeans  
The deep root of the old berry tree  
we used to climb  
A broken glass that casts shattered fragments  
in so many directions—  
at one time it was bound together and  
carefully planned—delicately formed but now  
strewn in so many places

Is it possible to collect the pieces and put  
them together with Krazy Glue? Will it be the same?  
Will it really hold or is the effort useless . . .

— *Michele Klotzer*

## Joshua: On His Own

The thick whiskers blanket what appears  
to be a handsome face.  
The eyes are innocent and frightened  
telling of the loved ones left behind.  
A leather duffel bag is slung over his shoulder.  
The contents being pieces of his other life.  
A brown frayed yarmulke sits perched high upon his head.  
His hand reaches up to it and he takes the silk  
from its nest.  
And like a young sparrow on his first flight  
he marches into the sunlight to begin  
on his own.

— *Michele Klotzer*

### English teacher

Enforced by Dad's tuition payments  
and the well-formed blonde at the end of the row,  
maybe even a modicum of curiosity,  
the student comes to class to learn  
whatever truth I measure out  
that I didn't tell him yesterday  
and he hadn't known he'd missed.  
I've overheard, "It's something to do.  
If I didn't go to class I'd go  
to pieces." And why not preserve sanity,  
avoid overreaching like Faustus?  
"Yeah, that old black magic!"

— *Ron Emma*



## Driving in Tornado Weather

Fields are tiles  
in stilted light.  
Air stills.  
The skyline's oily motor  
sparks. Shakes. Bangs.  
The cows toe barnward.  
Between warnings, static warns us.

There! A tapered skirt—  
miles tall—  
is shuffling up  
a ruff of dust.  
It dances on the cornbelt  
like a robber baron's wife.

Press the gas!  
A dark wind  
staggers fences,  
goads hysteric trees.  
Gravel rises up and stings.  
Nothing's sitting this one out  
but gravestones in their quarterlot.  
On the next hill, headlights break.  
They flee like us—  
the other way.

— *Edward Stessel*

### **If I Were a Tree**

If I were a tree . . .  
decidedly deciduous  
I'd assiduously  
pursue my evening meal

hard core  
to the bitter root  
I'd consume  
what you'd leave  
light blight  
chips lips  
flower bowers  
whatever you'd bark  
in the night.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

### **Last Ditch**

When the jailer with the black mole  
on his left cheek comes toward me,  
I shiver a little where I lie  
like the dispossessed of the windy streets  
of big cities everywhere  
who take a bottle for a woman  
and a rap on the ankles for their father.

— *Ron Emma*

### Supine

Lavinia on the worn-in couch,  
smiling at the witchery of  
her head man, who  
hated her,  
adjusted her hemline to raise it  
slightly, slowly, not sure  
shekels or story had won  
her the looks  
clearly she wanted, owning  
her lure. She ordered  
her breasts to firm  
and commanded  
that he take his hands  
off her, though they felt good:  
that wasn't why  
she had come.

— *Ron Emma*

### Night and Day

Putting on the net of night,  
no mean negligée, the cream of tarts  
prepared for the coming day:  
down and a down, down, down  
on her back she lay.

In the morning all dayblue time  
invited her down, down and a down, down down  
to the streets to see and be seen: town  
she would have, not sweet bird song  
or nun's dark gown.

— *Ron Emma*

### Intermingled

Intermingled were their lives,  
together they lived as one,  
creating a bond that could only be broken by they themselves.  
It broke, caused by one and many reasons.  
Reasons that only they will really know.  
They hurt each other as never before  
and thus in turn hurt themselves.  
The pain lingers on . . .  
    but the memories of the love shared  
    diminishes the pain and all that is left  
    in each heart is the love given it by  
    the other.

— *Kathy Schumacher*

### **Past Forevers Fade**

Love me in vision,  
and we will love until  
all the light of suns once  
again subsides into the void.

Hear me in love,  
and we will love  
past life's harmony.

Love me in touch,  
and we will love  
until the dust of  
all living bone blows  
from the plane of time.

Most of all feel me in  
thought and our love will  
be the succession of all time.

— *Mark Cherry*

## In the Sky

In the sky  
three birds died  
the other night

By the frozen morning  
their cold bodies  
disappeared  
in the misty sun.  
On the road,  
two people fought  
in painful hate

A snowflake fell  
melting on its way  
to hell  
dissolving in the air.  
In love  
one person offers her heart  
willing to give it away

But looking around  
seeing the death  
feeling the cold  
discovering the hate—  
how much life  
how much warmth  
how much love  
can one person have  
to thaw all the ice  
covering the hope  
on earth.

— *Michaela Kauffmann*

## The Lake

Every day they are there—he can see them from across the lake. There are always the black things that pick them up and drop them off in the morning. He watches when the pests begin their celebration. Games, music, levity. At times the sounds are too much for him and he yells out loud, “I hate you bastards. To fuckin’ hell with all of you!” Then he’ll reach down and pick up a fist-sized rock and hurl it at the bright beach on the other side only to watch it fall short and make a brief, unnoticed disturbance on the water.

He wakes very early in the summer because it’s usually too hot to sleep. When he rises, the pain in his bowed spine makes him stagger for a moment. Then he shuffles to the door facing the lake to see if they are there yet. He likes the fact that the trees encircling his house in the little cove hide him from view. This morning is no different than any other. The black vans are silently rolling onto the radiant beach on the other side. “You bastards are back!” he yells. But no one hears him.

Hunger distracts him for a moment, so he walks, holding his back, into his disheveled shanty and gets the long tree branch he uses as a fishing pole. Then he ties a length of string on the top and fastens the bright, silver, barbed plug on the end of the string. He takes his time walking back to his hidden shore.

Before casting his line into the water, he scowls at the pests on the other side of the lake. Then, closing one eye, he aims the bright lure at them. Sweeping his stubby arm in an arc, he watches the lure as it falls far short of its mark and into the water. “I never can reach ’em during the day,” he says to himself, “But tonight, when they don’t see me, I’ll get ’em.”

After a few hours of unsuccessful fishing, he pulls his line in and saunters back inside his shack. He passes the remains of a mirror on the far wall and stares bewildered at his reflection. “Why didn’t they jump at the pretty piece of silver I threw to them?” he asks. Then, answering his own question, he says, “They never jump in the daytime. But they will tonight.” He smiles through his beard at himself in the dusty mirror, then quickly frowns.

Looking out his back door, he watches as another of the black vans swoops into the bright light reflected off the beach and

gathers up two or three of the little shapes moving there, then glides away without a sound. "It's *them* things," he says, "They bring the bastards in, take 'em away and bring 'em back again." He lifts a gnarled middle finger at the scene and turns his back.

The house is never very cool during the night and there are usually more bugs to pester him in the house than outside. Living only twenty feet from the lake, the rising steam from the warm surface water reaches to every corner of his shanty then melts before he can swipe at it. The little gnats and all of their bothersome companions ride in on the dissipating mist and fly around his head only to annoy him with their constant noise.

His thoughts of the day and the heat have become too annoying. He opens up the battered cabinet below the sink and takes out the half-dry fifth of Jack Daniels. Raising the bottle to his lips, he takes a slow pull on the warm liquid. Leaving one more good slug in the bottle, he places it back in the same dusty spot beneath the sink. He knows he'll want it when he returns.

Picking up his pole with the string and lure attached, he climbs up the little hill behind his shack to the road above. He strides in a lumbering gait down to the corner where Route 34 touches the dam. Alone in the light from the street lamp, with the pole in his hand, he looks like a warrior prepared for battle against a stronger army.

He stares into the bright light of the street lamp and cringes as he looks at the insects flying around in the radiance. Lifting his pole into the air, he sweeps his arm in an arc and casts the silver plug into the group of bugs. The lure falls to the ground while the pests continue with their dance in the warmth of the light as if nothing happened. "Where are you, you bastards?" he screams. As the sound of his voice dies away, he sees his enemy. A bat swoops into the bright light, gathers a few insects into its mouth, then glides away without a sound.

He waits a moment then casts his lure into the group again. Another bat swoops in, attacks the lure and is hooked. Elated, he pulls the creature to the ground and crushes it with his foot.

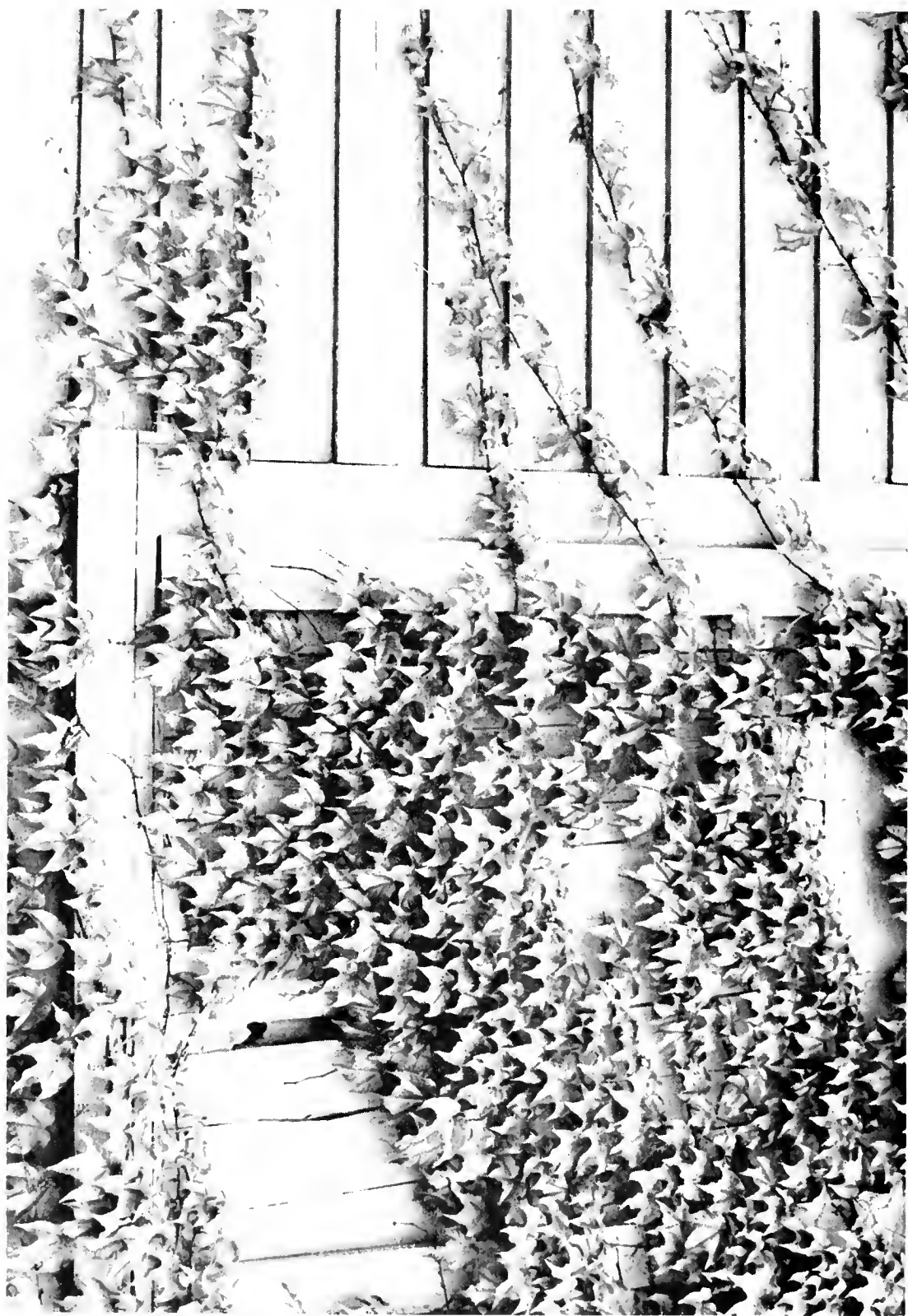
— *Bob Shortell*





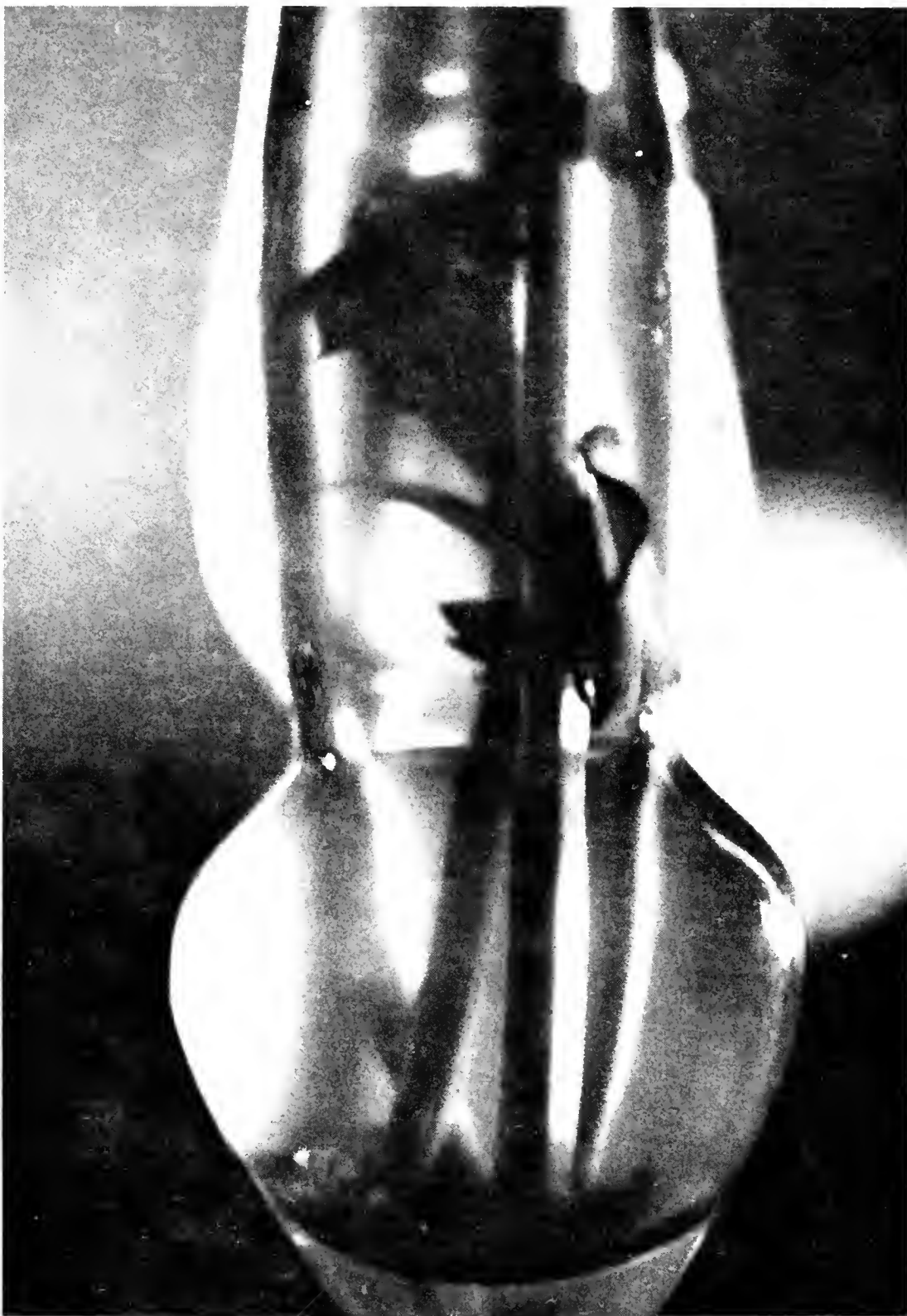
**Pensive Man**

— *Tammy Garson*



**Leaves**

— *Tammy Garson*



**Vase**

— *April Palm*



**Water**

— *Kathy Schumacher*

### Noah's Second Command

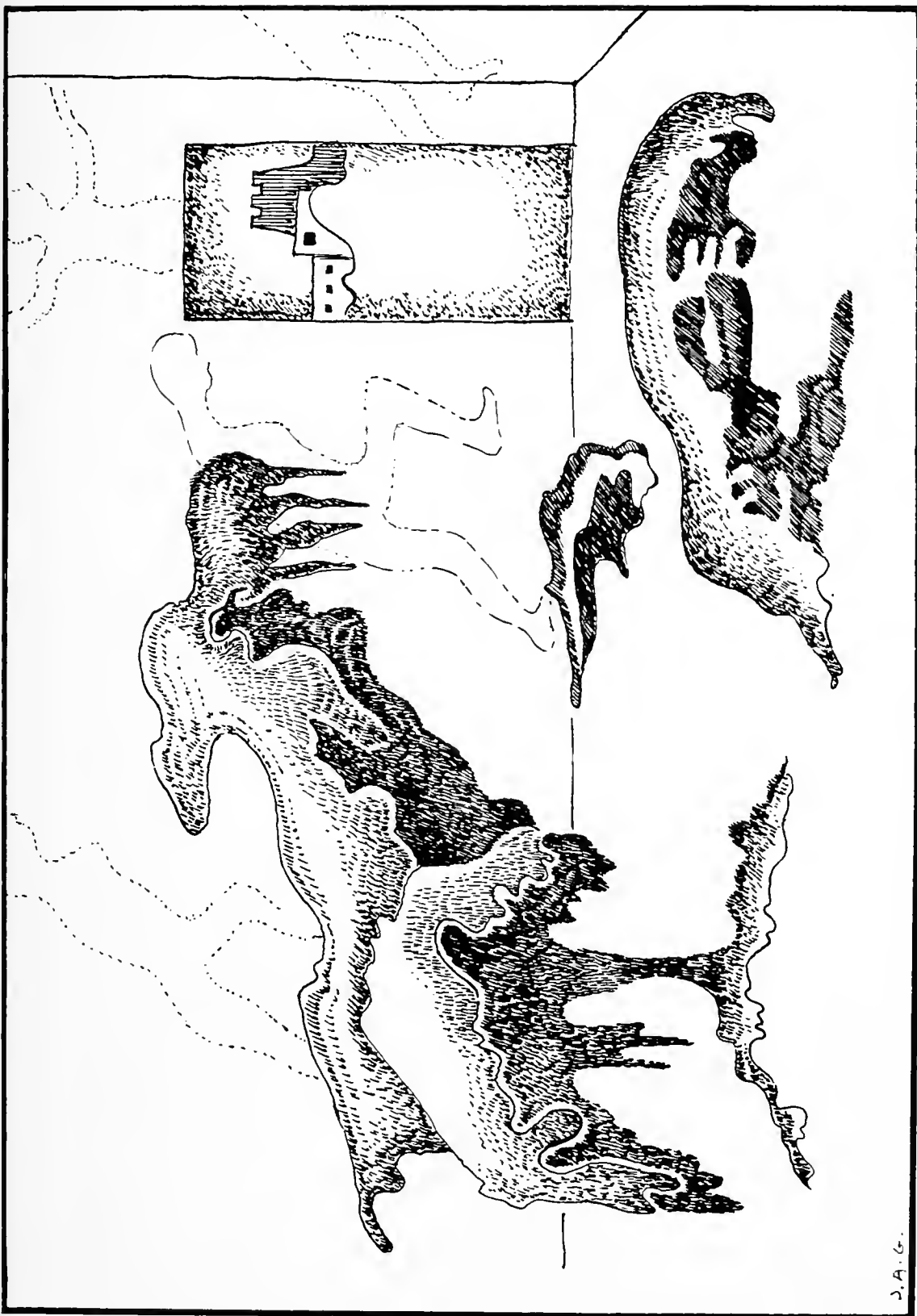
I open a can of dogfood  
And dolphins leap into the room,  
Clicking and squeaking their S.O.S.,  
Sonic sonnets of despair.  
And wild mustangs charge past the refrigerator,  
Knocking down the broom,  
And bellowing like doom,  
Tin cans tied to their hearts.  
Long-horn cattle, bullish on America,  
Thunder across the linoleum,  
And an army of sheep cry like assassinated babies.  
But it's all to no avail.  
Noah's Ark has turned to dog chow,  
And all the beasts are in it,  
Except the master-beast who feeds the dog.

— *Robert Pinghero*

### **My Unicorn**

I had spent  
All of my life  
Looking for my unicorn.  
I looked here and there,  
Far and wide,  
Always and everywhere.  
Until,  
One day,  
He found me.

— *Anne-Marie Theriault*



J.A.G.

## The Wealthy Poet

Habinnas, you happy man!  
Come, slave;  
Your master waits:  
His glass is dry.  
Hah!

The party's at full roar.  
Krista and Kyle nod to each other  
Over their wine;  
Their breasts tremble;  
They make lewd tongues.  
Hah! See it!  
I'd like to watch them at it,  
Those two women.

Habinnas, you poet!  
What a crowd of delights!  
Simple food but plenty,  
To your taste, spartan,  
The proper stuff for strength,  
For stamina (you lecher, Hah!),  
For wisdom: brain food.  
There's the pale sheath of sky,  
The sun's whitegold on the water,  
The wind gently teases sighs  
From stiff trees.

And later  
At the Bacchic hour  
There'll be music  
And dance  
And the dry smoke  
To tease the brain.  
Hah!



All is happiness  
And joy  
And Kyle and Krista  
Touching hands.

Therefore, Habinnas, why frown?  
You  
Are the solitary  
Cloud  
This day.  
Can I beguile you with a song?  
Perhaps a lewd dance  
Will amuse  
You.  
Hah!

You may as well dance and sing,  
Hanno;  
Or not;  
Do whatever you wish.

My home is yours.  
I am your Host.  
All I ask is that you leave me  
My frown.  
It is my only treasure.

Take care, Hanno:  
I've risen from a dream.  
My eyes are as unclouded  
As the sky you praise.  
The world rushes to its  
End  
While we eat.  
Words flake from my pen,  
Heartless,  
Dry as burnt wafer.  
There is dust in my head  
And dry smoke.

My past has risen, Hanno,  
Like a pale ghost.  
The child I thought I was,

The child of might  
And dreams,  
Of great faith,  
Of wise and somber  
Conquests:  
I've been wrong, Hanno.  
I've misremembered.  
I saw him rise before me  
Weak and fearful  
Full of spite.  
As I was then,  
So am I now:  
I've just recalled.

Your whitegold sun  
Can't change that.

Beauty and Death  
Cling to the world's Chariot,  
Accessible as the pale sky.  
Their acquaintance is no feat.

I want more:  
I want the Creator's potent nod,  
To mold,  
To chronicle the surfeit of the earth,  
To forge its treasure  
With panache.  
I want a place among those noble minds  
Who've gone before.

I'm not of their realm;  
Their heaven is my distant star.  
With cruelty  
I've been awakened.

Sing and dance, Hanno.  
Make this day and night  
The world's wake:  
It spins to darkness.  
My thoughts are dark.

Yet  
While I pause,  
There's the tease of metaphor:  
A ram stares down at me  
From the lip of a well.  
Behind him is the full moon.

Dance and sing, Hanno.  
It will soon be dark  
And I'll be gone to sleep.  
Hand me my cup, please.

Which?  
The one heavy with almond froth.

It's time to drink,  
Still beneath the whitegold  
Sun.

— *Jay Halpern*



**Hand Print**

— *Unknown*

## Morality

Morality mounts a noble steed, a proud  
and confident spectre who illuminates  
His earth with righteousness.  
Good will is scattered along His path  
like horse shit.  
Crack!  
His benevolent whip,  
the hooves pound furiously upon the sheets  
of this earth escaping His thunder.  
He lances the darkness;  
blood flows from the noble neck  
and mixes with spit.  
Morality dies slowly.  
Death juice trickles on a bag of cement,  
then His statue casts a shadow  
across another lonely park bench.

\*\*\*\*\*

— *Thomas Brennan Ward*

### **The Death of Peregrinus Proteus**

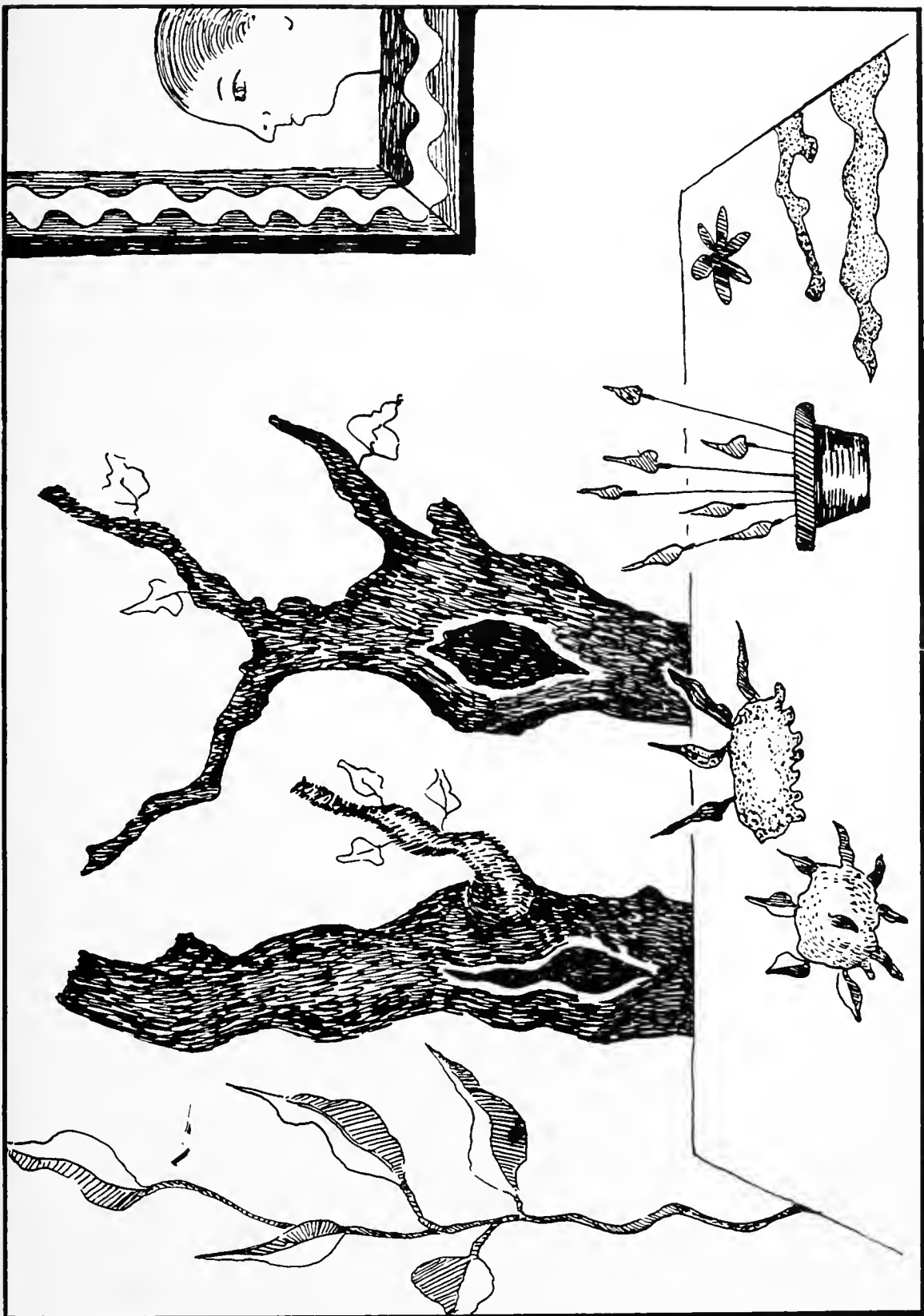
Mock me through the flames:  
I see your howling faces  
Egging me on.  
There's fame  
And the giant specters  
Of gods  
To embrace my spirit.  
The Victors nod their triumph  
To the adoring crowd.  
The olive wreath rests  
Upon the threshold of the temple.  
Before my nostrils flared  
With the harsh scent of burnt flesh,  
Summer kissed the air.  
I've done with the Games,  
The mockery,  
The wandering:  
O men of Elis  
Breathe deeply of my soul,  
My scorched flesh.

— *Jay Halpern*

## Diocles

Gather among tombs,  
Lips pressed to lips:  
The boys touch  
And laugh,  
Their tongues dancing.  
Diocles, come forth,  
Stretch out your hand;  
Your lover lived beneath  
Your shield (to mourn  
Your heroism and  
Death:  
Be content that horror  
And lost love  
Have blossomed into garlands  
Of gay flowers)  
And immortal songs.

— *Jay Halpern*



### **If I were a Breath**

If I were a breath  
I'd swallow a tree  
and ground its green  
in the shape of my dreams:  
roots chattering like the feet of a rooster  
feathers draped with snow  
ice cream drooping  
in scoops of cream  
mushrooms blooming in doorways  
fingers fall like beaks  
hook nose hides in shadow  
icon leaking east.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*



### The Clown

The Clown danced,  
in front of the crowd.  
Bright colors swirled around the room,  
children were laughing.  
The Clown danced,  
On and On,  
Faster and Faster,  
Brighter and Brighter.  
Suddenly—  
A child ran up and tore off its mask,  
abruptly ending the dance.  
The crowd gasped, for  
they were surprised to see that  
The Clown  
was only  
me.

— *Anne Marie Theriault*

### **Yesterday Poem**

I'll bet you're sorry now,  
Asshole.

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A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood  
isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast  
surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,  
out of itself  
Ever unrolling them, ever tirelessly speeding  
them.  
And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans  
of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking  
the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the  
ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch  
somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman